



# SCAMPER TECHNIQUE<sup>1</sup>

A Supplement to the *Public Health Quality Improvement Encyclopedia*<sup>2</sup>

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**Description:** The **SCAMPER** Technique is a process improvement tool to assist teams in improving existing processes or creating new ones.

The SCAMPER checklist helps a QI team increase their creativity and think outside the box to generate many ideas for improvement. Because this technique is an idea generator, many of the ideas may turn out to be impractical or too costly. While brainstorming the ideas, just write them down without judging them; prioritization and elimination will come later in the process.

**Use it** after a quality improvement team has developed the flow chart of the existing process, understands the process' baseline measures, and has developed root causes of the process' problems or bottlenecks along with the Five S's.

The letters in the acronym **SCAMPER** stand for:

- **S – Substitute**
- **C – Combine**
- **A – Adapt**
- **M – Modify**
- **P – Put to another use**
- **E – Eliminate**
- **R – Reverse**

Figure 1 depicts the SCAMPER Technique that can be used to help the QI team see their ideas as they unfold. Seeing the ideas helps to generate more options and form combinations. With

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<sup>1</sup> *Thinkertoys: A Handbook of Creative-Thinking Techniques*. M. Michalko, Ten Speed Press, 2006.

<sup>2</sup> *Public Health Quality Improvement Encyclopedia*, J. Moran and G. Duffy, Public Health Foundation, 2012.

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the SCAMPER Technique we are seeking a *quantity* of ideas. The *quality* of ideas can be judged later in the improvement process.

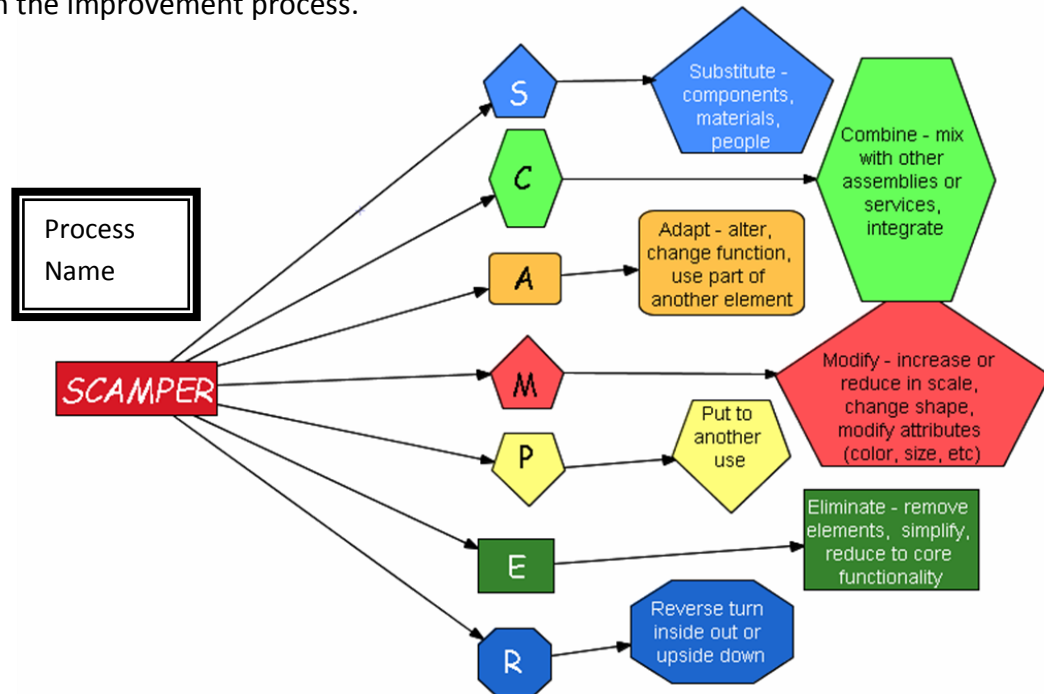


Figure 1<sup>1</sup>

### Construction Steps:

The team can use a worksheet to improve creativity using the SCAMPER Technique and record ideas for improvement. The first column in the worksheet details the SCAMPER acronym, the second column details some key words to stimulate discussion and idea generation, the third column is for recording the ideas generated, the fourth column is for listing the ideas selected for possible usage through a prioritization process<sup>2</sup>, and the last column indicates how the ideas might be used in the process improvement. The example below was provided by the Alabama Department of Public Health.

**Next step:** The SCAMPER Technique is an idea generator that should be used in conjunction with the Five S's<sup>2</sup> Technique and the 8 Lean Wastes Checklist<sup>2</sup> to help a quality improvement (QI) team find the optimum process improvements. This will allow the team to deliver what the customer desires more effectively. Using these three techniques together is also useful when developing a new process, helping the team avoid building problems into the process that will have to be fixed later. This combination of techniques is a way to "Foolproof" a process, ensuring that every step adds value for the customer.

**Related Tools:** Control and Influence Matrix, Five S's, Impact Effort Plot, Lean Wastes, Prioritization Matrix

Draft AIM Statement: An opportunity exists to increase clinic efficiency and patient satisfaction by decreasing clinic wait times.

SCAMPER	Some Key Words To Help Generate Ideas	Record Ideas Generated	List Prioritized Ideas Selected	How Will They Be Incorporated Into The Improvement?
Substitute	Components, ingredients, procedures, exchange, replace, materials, people, location, policy, procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Change staff schedules, stagger start times &amp; lunches</li> <li>Hire more efficient staff</li> <li>Change clinic flow</li> </ul>	Stagger start times & lunches	Clerk and RN Arrive at 7:30; client in room at 8 for NP
Combine	Combine, mix, merge, integrate, blend, comingle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integrate scheduling across program types</li> </ul>		
Adapt	Alter, change, copy, borrow, adopt, similar, incorporate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Change clinic start times</li> <li>Stagger start times by program</li> <li>Client reminder letters/calls</li> </ul>	Client reminder calls	Use Check-in clerks to make reminder calls after last patient checked-in
Modify	Augment, magnify/minify, change shape/color/size, modify attributes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offer prize drawings for clients on time for appointments</li> <li>Add team huddles for team building and cycle time reviews</li> </ul>	Add team huddles	Improve clinical performance by sharing performance goals with staff
Put To Other Use	Recycle, use elsewhere, rearrange, replace, exchange, reposition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alter pill-pick up appointment times vs. full FP visit</li> <li>Maximize staff utilization</li> <li>Change walk-in schedule time</li> <li>Data entry responsibilities</li> </ul>	Maximize staff utilization	Schedule fast track appt. for first appt. of day. Change scheduling so deferrals are completed prior to the NP appointment so there are no true initial visits on family planning days.
Eliminate	Remove, eradicate, simplify, narrow, non-essential, disregard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Remove program-blocked schedules by visit type</li> <li>Reduce information gathered on repeat client health history forms</li> <li>Standardize clinic supplies</li> </ul>	Design all clinic room supplies exactly the same way (simplify)	Through a team planning process, design a supply template for use by all staff.
Reverse	Rearrange, opposite, turn the other way around or up or inside out, exchange, manipulate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Require late patients to reschedule rather than be worked into the schedule.</li> <li>Stop over booking morning appts.</li> <li>Stop under booking afternoon appts.</li> </ul>	Scheduling	Train schedulers to assure 50% appt. in am/50%pm. Increase supervisor accountability to monitor appointment template.